

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-02 PRS-01

EUR-10 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 IO-03

DPW-01 OMB-01 RSR-01 /071 W

----- 102785

R 160930Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2618

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USDEL JEC PARIS

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

CONFIDENTIAL PHNOM PENH 8540

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: SOCIO-REPUBLICANS FEARFUL OF A SIRIK MATAK

COUP; MAY TURN TOWARDS DEMOCRATS

REF: PHNOM PENH 8470

1. ACCORDING TO SOCIO-REPUBLICAN SECRETARY GENERAL HANG THUN HAK, HE AND OTHER KEY LEADERS OF THE PARTY WENT ON ALERT AT 0200 THE MORNING OF AUGUST 14 AS A RESULT OF A REPORT THAT SIRIK MATAK AND ARMY OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH HIM WERE IN THE PROCESS OF SEIZING POWER. HAK SAID THAT HE STAYED UP MUCH OF THE NIGHT, TELEPHONING CONTACTS TO VERIFY THE REPORT.

2. WITH THE OLD SOCIO-REPUBLICAN FEARS OF SIRIK'S AMBITION THUS REFRESHED, HAK SAID THAT THE AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON A WORKING ALLIANCE WITH THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

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(REFTEL) WOULD REMAIN A DEAD LETTER. RATHER A MAN

PRINCIPLE OF SOCIO-REPUBLICAN POLICY WILL BE TO CONTAIN THE REPUBLICAN THRUST AND QTE TO DISTANCE UNQTE SIRIK MATAK FROM POWER, PERHAPS FROM THE COUNTRY. THUS HAK RENEWED ON AUGUST 14 IN MORE PRESSING TERMS THE APPEAL HE HAD EARLIER MADE AT OUR REQUEST TO IN TAM TO STAY ON.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, HAK TELLS ENDERS THAT HE HAS SENT A MESSAGE TO DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRESIDENT CHAU SAU TO ASK ON WHAT TERMS THE DEMOCRATS MIGHT EVENTUALLY JOIN THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS IN A COALITION GOVERNMENT. HAK SAYS THAT CHAU SAU'S REPLY WAS: EITHER LON NOL AND SIRIK MATAK MUST GO, OR THERE MUST BE A FULL GRANT OF POWERS FROM LON NOL TO THE CABINET.

4. COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT MAY HAVE TRIGGERED THE SIRIK MATAK COUP SCARE HAK REFERS TO. ABSENT CORROBORATION, WE TAKE IT AS A TYPICAL CASE OF THE PHNOM PENH JITTERS, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF HIGH SUSPICION IN WHICH POLITICIANS HERE LIVE.

5. HAK SAID THAT IN TAM LISTENED WITHOUT COMMENT TO HIS PLEAS TO STAY ON AT LEAST INTO SEPTEMBER, AND DID NOT RENEW HIS THREAT TO RESIGN; HAK IS MODERATELY HOPEFUL THAT HE WILL STAY. HOWEVER, LIKE ALL OTHER PHNOM PENH POLITICIANS KAH IS CONVINCED THAT IN TAM'S RESIGNATION IS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME, AND IS WORKING FULL TIME ON THE SUCCESSION. REGARDING THE SOCIO-REPUBLICANS ANIMUS AGAINST SIRIK, WE REMINDED HIM THAT TIME AND AGAIN CAMBODIAN PARTIES HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE SOLUTION TO ALL THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS LAY IN GETTING RID OF A GIVEN PERSONALITY, ONLY TO FIND THAT NOTHING REALLY CHANGED. WE POINTED OUT CHANGES IN THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL COULD SET IN MOTION AN UNRAVELLING AND DEMORALIZING EFFECT THAT NO ONE COULD CONTROL, AND URGED HAK TO THINK IN TERMS OF THE BROADEST POSSIBLE COALITION TO REPLACE IN TAM, IF POSSIBLE INCLUDING BOTH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS. IF THE SINE QUA NON FOR SUCH A COALITION WOULD BE A BROAD GRANT OF POWER FROM THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL TO THE CABINET, THEN HAK SHOULD BEGIN TO THINK SERIOUSLY OF WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH THAT COULD BE

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ACCOMPLISHED. BUT FIRST, THE BATTLE OF PHNOM PENH MUST BE FOUGHT AND WON.

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